

216

A

SECOND ADDRESS

TO THE

Friends of the late REV. MR. ELLIOT.

in answer to the friends

By W. MOORE.

[17541]



GENTLEMEN,

IN my former address, I pointed out what I thought to be some of your and Mr. E.'s mistakes, and, as I thought, in a spirit of meekness and christian candour ; I come now to shew you,

In the first place, the reason why he was suffered to fall into those mistakes.

Secondly, to obviate some of his objections to the doctrine of the Trinity. And

In the third place, to offer a few serious reflections on that sublime and awful mystery.

First, I have before hinted that the late Rev. Mr. Elliot, leaned too much to his own understanding ; to elucidate this, I will only pass some observations on his own words, P. 126. " Nor can our understanding conceive, how one and the same spirit should, in a proper sense, be the spirit of two distinct persons," &c.

So then, here is Mr. E.'s reason for rejecting a plain scriptural testimony, viz. because his understanding could not conceive of it. Would not the same argument operate equally against the eternity, immensity and ubiquity of God ; against the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and indeed against almost every article of the christian faith?—Suppose

I were to embrace Mr. E.'s sentiment of Christ's existing from eternity as a human spirit, how can I conceive of such an existence? much less of such a spirit being infinitely united to the Deity, and yet sent into the body of Jesus of Nazareth?—So then, while Mr. E. rejects one hypothesis, because he cannot conceive of it, he calls upon me to believe that which is equally inconceivable.—That the Holy Spirit is frequently called the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of Christ, needs no proof; how he can be the spirit of these two persons, I am not called upon to conceive; because it is a matter which rests entirely on Divine Revelation, and the manner of it, as belonging to the mode of the divine existence, must necessarily be incomprehensible.

I therefore blame Mr. E. and his friends, for rejecting always what they cannot comprehend, as a sad proof of leaning too much to their own understandings. Yet Mr. E. says, P. 36. "I cannot find that God hath any where revealed the manner of his subsisting in the divine essence." One would have thought, after such a concession, that Mr. E. could not, so peremptorily as he has afterwards done, have denied the possibility of there being three persons in the Godhead.

Again, P. 136. "what distinctions there may be in the infinite and ever blessed God, we presume not to say: God is great, and we know him

him not," &c. How happy would it have been for Mr. E. and his friends, if he had stopped here?—If God were comprehensible, he would not be what he is.—The dictates of natural and revealed religion, upon this subject, have the same effect upon all parties, when preconceived prejudice does not intervene.—Yet Mr. E. takes upon him to assert, that a trinity of persons cannot agree with the unity of the Godhead: but it might have been asked, how do you know? seeing “we know not what distinctions there may be in the infinite and ever blessed God.”—Had any Trinitarian said, that the three persons in the Deity were precisely the same as three persons among the creatures: then Mr. E. might have argued thus, “there cannot be three persons, because God is one.”—But no man in his senses, ever did, or ever will attempt to say that God is one, in the very same sense as he is three, nor that he is three in precisely the same sense as he is one.—Consequently, Mr. E.’s reasoning on this subject is neither fair nor just.—Mr. E. draws the persons in the Deity so nearly to resemble persons in the creatures, that he makes the Almighty to be such an one as himself, and then blames the Trinitarians for what he himself is the author of.

Again, P. 112, he says, “It seems, therefore, to be contrary to all reason, and also to the express testimony of scripture, to say that
Christ

Christ, as a divine person, and not as man, was chosen of God, covenanted to redeem men, and fulfil the conditions of life for them." &c.

Again, P. 43. "When, I say, this glorious person, the Son of God, was made flesh, obeyed the law, and bore the curse for sinners; it was not the Father that was made flesh, obeyed, and suffered;" "for Deity itself could not obey, or suffer."—Yet he says P. 53. "Christ is called Immanuel," (because) "that the divine and human natures were united, or that the Father and Son are by union one; and consequently when Christ took flesh, the very and eternal God, was manifested in flesh."—P. 261. "God was in Christ his Son, when he bore our sins, and was made a curse for us; and therefore Christ did not of himself, and by himself, alone redeem the world."

Is not this making Deity to suffer? The only difference now between Mr. E. and the Trinitarians is, that the former says it was the person of the Father who inhabited Christ; the latter say it was more properly the Son; but as to making Deity suffer, Mr. E. is full as guilty of it as those he objects to. Again, P. 216. "To pierce God's own Son was, as it were, to pierce God himself,"—P. 44. "Christ hath many names, to express his most infinite and personal union with the Father."—What are we to understand by "*infinite union*."—Can any thing finite, be said to have infinite union with infinity?

infinity? If Christ was but a human spirit, he bore no proportion with an infinite Being.—P. 310. “A Mediator must be a third person, distinct from, and standing between, both the parties at variance.” &c.—P. 49. “Now Christ, is this Mediator, &c. who hath both natures, the human and divine, mysteriously united in himself.”

From the passages already cited, and multitudes more of a similar nature, contained in the same book, I sum up these inferences, as proofs of Mr. E.'s having paid too great a deference to his own understanding.

1. That while he acknowledges the mode of the divine existence to be unrevealed and inexplicable, yet he himself attempts to explain it; and insists on it, that God never existed in any other way, but as one individual and numerical person.

2. While he objects to some hypotheses, because they are above the comprehension of human reason, he himself advances propositions altogether as unreasonable, and incomprehensible.

3. While he objects to the trinitarian notion of the divine person of the Son inhabiting the humanity of Jesus Christ, he himself makes the person of the Father to possess that humanity in as full and ample a manner.

4. He has done, what all persons who think too highly of themselves must do, he has contradicted

tradiſted himſelf. For while he blames the trinitarians for inconſiſtencies, he has the inconſiſtency of making the whole of our ſalvation to depend on the work and undertaking of Jeſus Chriſt, as a mere man; while at the ſame time he makes the efficacy of all Chriſt's work and undertaking, to depend on his union with, and being ever poſſeſſed of the Father.

I find, I think, another proof of Mr. E.'s leaning too much to his own underſtanding. In his preface, page 12, he ſays, "I have alſo diligently ſearched the ſcriptures, with much earneſt prayer to God, for a right underſtanding therein," &c.

It is undoubtedly right to ſearch the ſcriptures diligently.—It is above all things right and highly proper that we ſhould make uſe of much earneſt prayer to God: but, I preſume, there are certain caſes in which we ſhould have no right to expect that God ſhould answer our prayers, or that our deepeſt reſearches ſhould be ſucceſſful; yea rather our reſearches would become preſumptuous, and our prayers and tears would prove offenſive to God, and a ſnare to ourſelves. I will inſtance only three.

1. When we bring our preconceived prejudices to the word of God, or to the throne of grace. Such is the caſe with all bigots.—So prayed the Jews, Iſa. i. 15.—So prayed the Papiſts againſt the Proteſtants.—The Prelatical Hyrarchy againſt the Sectaries, & vice verſa.

2. When

2. When we have any wrong motives in our hearts, as James speaks, Jam. i. 7. " Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord "—Jam. iv. 3. " Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

3. When we are aiming at things too high for us, Psa. cxxxi.—Such is the expectation that God should reveal to us what he has not revealed, nor promised to reveal, in his blessed book.—Among these is the doctrine of the trinity.—Mr. E. found that others had not succeeded in attempting to explain: had he reasoned as he ought, he would have found that to explain on such a subject, was but to obscure, and he would in humility have declined the task: but vainly supposing that he should succeed better than all who had gone before him, he read, studied, and prayed, till he was bewildered himself, and consequently bewildered others.

I would not be thought here to reflect unfavorably on the character of Mr. Elliot; God forbid! I have the highest veneration for his abilities as a Man, and his piety as a Christian: but when I find Calvinists and Arminians, Unitarians and Trinitarians, all studying and praying, expecting to be divinely directed, and yet all continuing firmly rooted in their former sentiments, I must conclude, that there is a defect somewhere; and the most reasonable, is to suppose that it is in their own minds, and that

B

they

they are all aiming at things which are too high for them.

To pray for clearer and fuller discoveries of the manner of the divine subsistence, than what the bible affords us, argues great presumption; it springs from a want of faith in divine revelation; it indicates a curiosity similar to that which induced our first Parents to take “ of the fruit of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste brought death into the world, and all our woe.” Is it any wonder if such a request be punished with blindness? So prayed Lord Herbert, when he was in doubt whether or not he should publish his infamous book against Christianity, called *De Veritate*: he tells us he kneeled down, and prayed that God would give him a sign; he had a sign, which his Lordship’s preconceived prejudice induced him very readily to conclude must be in favor of his darling object; consequently he printed his book; but I presume the most impartial judges will conclude, that his Lordship’s answer to prayer, originated in his own breast, if it was not from a more infernal source.—I do not mean to compare Mr. E. with Lord Herbert; I only mention this as an instance of sinfully and presumptuously praying for what God has thought fit to hide from us.—This is to find fault with infinite wisdom; to set up our own judgments in opposition to his; to ask him to mend his own work, and either to deify us,
or

or to undeify himself that we may comprehend him.

Let us, my brethren, above all things, pray to be kept humble, expecting only to know the will of God, as far as we are kept humbly obedient to it; for it is written, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine," John vii. 17.—Let us be content to take divine revelation as it is, without attempting to mend it; and only labor to understand it, in order to practical improvement.

My second proposition was to obviate some of Mr. E.'s objections to the doctrine of the Trinity.

I think his leading objections are these following:

1. That it is impossible to maintain the indivisible unity of God upon that plan.—That the doctrine of three Persons in the Godhead, does necessarily imply the idea of three Gods; and consequently that all Trinitarians are Tritheists.

2. That the notion of the divine Person of the Son inhabiting the body of Jesus Christ, makes Deity to suffer and die; which is blasphemous, and impossible.

3. That the supposing a divine Person in the Deity, to inhabit the body of the Mediator, is making the Deity to mediate to himself.

I think all the objections contained in the aforesaid book, may be refered to one or other of the abovementioned ; all of which I hope to obviate in order, and to shew that there is no solid weight in them.

Did the doctrine of the Trinity necessarily imply three Gods, I would publicly disavow it, and declare myself a *Unitarian* in abhorrence of such an heresy.

But I presume, no such consequence does necessarily follow.

If the number *three*, as applied to the persons in the Godhead, had ever been described, by any Trinitarian, as precisely and numerically *three*, in the very same sense as we allow God is said to be one, there would have been no need of arguments to have confuted such an assertion, being in itself, self-contradictory: but no such assertion, as far as I know of, has ever been advanced by any.

Orthodox Trinitarians have ever been cautious of conceiving of *Persons* in the Deity as on a level with *persons* among the creatures, where every distinct person makes a distinct and separate being ; well knowing that God can bear no comparison to his creatures.—When therefore we say, *there are three in the Godhead*, we ought not to be accused of *Tritheism*, because we strenuously and uniformly assert, that these are not three Gods, but only three Persons in one God, or a triune way of the divine existence,
which

which the scripture holds out to us, 1 John v. 7. being as tenacious of supporting the indivisible unity of God, as it is possible for any to be who may differ from us in other opinions.

I presume no Arian, or Socinian, will risk his philosophical credit so far as to say, that it is impossible for three to be one, or one three, in any kind of sense whatever.—We know that two are one, and one two, in the composition of every human creature.—What then must the audacity of that person be, who shall deny the possibility of there being three Persons in the Godhead, of which he can have no just ideas but as revealed in the scriptures, where the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons, and the unity of the Godhead, are both so repeatedly asserted, and so firmly established?

Had commentators always contented themselves with the scriptural description of the Trinity, without explanation, they would have prevented much cavilling, and preserved the peace of the Church; but being wise above that which is written, their attempts to explain, what God has thought fit to hide, has only served to furnish cavillers with new objections to the truth; and thus they have kindled a fire which many waters cannot quench. Let us, my brethren, return to the good old way of believing in, and worshipping, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God in three Persons, as they are left us in the Bible, without attempting farther to

to explain in what sense they are three, and in what sense they are one.

Secondly, Respecting the second objection of Mr. E.'s to the doctrine of the Trinity, viz. that it supposes Deity to suffer and die, which are impossible; I observe, that it belongs as much to his system, as to the Trinitarian's, for Mr. E. says, P. 53. "When Christ took flesh, the very and eternal God, &c. was manifested in flesh."—P. 54. "The Son must never be considered alone without the Father, &c."—ibid. "God the Father continued to dwell in him in his state of humiliation, &c."—ibid. "It comprehends likewise his being made under the law for men, fulfilling all its righteousness, and suffering its curse in our room and stead, &c."—P. 261. "That God was in Christ his Son, when he bore our sins, and was made a curse for us: and that therefore Christ did not of himself, and by himself alone, redeem the world, &c."—P. 216. "Thus to pierce God's own Son was, as it were, to pierce God himself, &c."—Now I appeal to all men of candor, and impartiality, if ever any Trinitarian made Deity liable to sufferings and death more truly than Mr. Elliot has done. Not that I accuse Mr. E. of making Deity to suffer and die; but I say, all that Trinitarians have ascribed, of sufferings and death, to the Son, Mr. E. has equally ascribed to the Father; so that if this be admitted as an objection to Trinitarianism, it operates much stronger

stronger as an objection against Mr. E.'s sentiments.

Thirdly, The same may be said likewise of Mr. E.'s third objection, viz. that it makes God to mediate to himself; for in P. 112. he says, "God the Father was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."—Again, P. 125. "We constantly affirm, that the living God the Father is personally united to his Son, the Man Christ Jesus; and dwells in him immediately in all the fulness of Deity."—Again, P. 262. "The Father, by his infinite Godhead, was indeed united to the Son, and dwelt in him, when he laid down his life for us."—Now I think those passages, compared with the before cited, contains all the weight of Mr. E.'s objections, and he does in reality make Deity to mediate to himself as much as any Trinitarian can do. But, to remove this objection more effectually, I think it should be considered, that the satisfaction of Christ, was not so properly made to the absolute will of Deity; God himself, for his own sake, wanting no satisfaction, as he could suffer no injury; but that it was properly a satisfaction to divine justice, that God might save sinners in a way truly worthy of himself, consistent with the divine justice, in perfect harmony with all his attributes, to the honor of all his glorious and infinite perfections, and to the manifestation of the righteousness of his moral government; or as the Apostle expresses it, Rom. iii. 26.

To

To declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

This Mr. E. admits in one place, and if he had strictly adhered to his own sentiments, he would never have brought this objection against Trinitarians.—P. 103. “ Now, it was God’s eternal purpose in this covenant, to pardon and save sinners by his Son Jesus Christ, both in a way of justice and grace, &c.”

Who does not now see that it would be altogether consistent with our most exalted ideas of honor, for the most exalted of all beings to step forward and become Mediator between himself and his aggressor, for the preservation of his own rights, and at the same time to shew mercy to the guilty.—Not that I insist on God’s becoming a Mediator to himself; I deny the charge: but I ask again, how does the justice of God appear in punishing one man for the sins of another; or wherein doth it appear that the sufferings of one man can make atonement for the sins of another; or, if Jesus Christ be but a mere man, what propriety is there in calling him a third Person, between God and man? He is properly of the offending party, and though he never personally offended, yet he would be unfit for a Mediator, being only a mere man.

Here, I think, I find another inconsistency in Mr. E. for, while he has repeatedly, and at large, asserted that the pre-existent state of Jesus Christ

Christ was nothing more than that of a human spirit, filled with the fulness of Deity; yet he has also asserted that Jesus Christ, in his own proper Person, was neither God nor man, but a third Person, between both. Where may not the roving fancy of men wander when they leave the bible?—the Apostle says, “he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham.” Heb. ii. 16.—By the seed of Abraham, we must certainly understand the human nature, and as we have no knowledge of any beings between God and angels, and that which took human nature being not angelic, we have a right to conclude that it was truly and properly divine.

If I conceive rightly of this subject, I think the Mediator ought to be strictly and properly of both parties, both God and man, which it appears Jesus Christ was, and it was his being such, which gave value and efficacy to all he did and suffered.

To object that God cannot die, is childish. Neither could, nor did, the human soul of Jesus Christ die.—Nothing but that which is material, can be mortal; yet when the body of any man dies, we properly say the man dies, though in truth the most noble part of him is at that moment still living.—But a most awful consequence appears to me to follow Mr. E’s scheme. He says, P. 259, “We wanted for a Saviour, a man that had never sinned.”—Alas! alas!

is this all we wanted?—Then we are all Socinians at a stroke.—For if Jesus Christ was but a mere man, and all that was wanting to save us was the death of his body, and that merely as a satisfaction to the sovereign and absolute will of the Almighty, I see no impropriety in supposing that any less worthy body might have done, if God had been pleased so to appoint; for, whatever purity or perfection may be attributed to the human body of Jesus Christ, it was still no more than a material and mortal body, and its efficacy did not depend on its own intrinsic worth, but on the sovereign will of him that appointed it; for no material body can bear any proportion with infinite justice, and infinite purity; one body must therefore be naturally as efficacious with God as another, and oh! I shudder to repeat it, the blasphemous inference, which some Socinians have deduced, inevitably follows, viz. that, “the blood of a calf would have been sufficient, if God had thought fit to have appointed it.”

It is indeed allowed, that whatever God is pleased to appoint, shall be sufficient to the end for which it is appointed; but it must likewise be acknowledged, that infinite wisdom can never appoint any thing but what is the most suitable and proper, all things considered; and it constitutes a very great part of the happy employment of all rational and intelligent creatures, to discover and admire the wisdom and goodness, the beauty

beauty, harmony, and propriety of all the works of God:—But O! what wonders shine in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as God and Man united, or God manifested in the flesh, reconciling the world unto himself? Here, in the sublime language of the enwrap't prophet, Psa. lxxxv. 10, "Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other." We can now most cordially unite in the ascriptions, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are all thy ways thou King of saints." Rev. xv. 3. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." Psa. cxlv. 17.

To attribute the works of Jehovah to the mere dictates of a sovereign and absolute will, which have no other cause nor motive but merely because he wills them, is to bring down the Deity too much upon a level with the unrighteous and cruel tyrants of the earth.—But to conceive of the Almighty as doing this or that because it is most suitable to his divine perfections to do so, (though we may not be always able so describe wherein it is so) is, in my apprehension, the most sound divinity.

Thus, I think, I have obviated Mr. E.'s objections to the sacred doctrine of the Trinity, and shewn that there are still greater objections lie against his own scheme.

Suffer me now, in the third and last place, as proposed, to offer some serious reflections on that sublime and awful mystery.

I call this a mystery, because it is what is not, never was, nor ever will be, fully revealed.—I call it sublime and awful, because it respects the mode of the divine existence, concerning whom it is said, *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?* Job xi. 7. *He maketh darknefs his secret places,* &c. Psa. xviii. 11. It is objected, seeing God has no where revealed the exact manner of his own existence; and the doctrine of the Trinity is acknowledged to be an unfathomable mystery; why is it then made an article of the faith? To this I reply; the existence of a Trinity is no mystery; it is so clearly and fully revealed, that it is in a sense acknowledged by all, only under different representations.—Mr. E. himself acknowledges a Trinity. P. 253. “I humbly hope, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as here set forth, will appear both rational and scriptural, &c.” Mr. E.’s explanation of it is well known; but a Trinity he finds himself obliged to acknowledge. The distinct Names, Offices, and Works of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are as evidently kept up throughout the New Testament as the being of a God.—Even if we allow that the 7th verse of the vth chap. of the first Epistle of St. John, is an interpolation, we give to the Soci-
nians

nians no advantage by it; for the doctrine of the Trinity is sufficiently supported throughout the whole of that epistle, without the text in dispute.

But I see no reason for rejecting that verse, seeing it is disputed whether the Trinitarians interpolated it, or the Arians had previously expunged it: the latter appears to me the most plausible; and Mr. E. appears to be so conscious of this, that he does not choose to make any kind of use of the Socinian objections upon that subject.

Here is no mystery in all this then.—There are evidently Three in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one: this proposition is as much the subject of my comprehension, and the object of my faith, as that *there is one God*.—All the difficulty and all the mystery lays in explaining how they are three, and how they are one, and this must ever remain a mystery after all possible explanations. The reasons why this doctrine of a Trinity in Unity should ever be kept up, as an article of our faith, appear to me to be these, 1. That we might have the most just notions of God and his works: 2. That we might have just ideas of, and pay the proper respective worship to each of the divine Persons, in their respective Offices and Works; and 3. As a criterion, to guard against the delusive and dangerous errors of Arianism, and Socinianism, which appear to be the bane
of

of all vital religion; which spread spiritual death upon the churches wherever they prevail; and which we have particular need to be guarded against in our age of Formality, Scepticism and spiritual Diffipation.

Having thus completed my design, in which I hope I have at least said enough to obviate the objections, and remove the stumbling blocks, which lay in the way of some scrupulous, but well meaning minds, I beg leave to conclude my address with an observation or two.

First, I observe, I have been actuated through the whole of these my addresses, as far as I am a proper judge of myself, equally with a regard to the divine Glory, a love of Truth, and a christian concern for the welfare of precious souls, which entitles me at least to the candour, the good wishes and prayers of all my readers.

Secondly, I have studiously and conscientiously avoided every expression that I thought might have the least tendency to give offence to any, either Jew, or Gentile, or the church of God; so that if any be offended, I would earnestly entreat them to examine their own hearts, and enquire whether the cause of offence be not in their own spirit, rather than in any provocation I have given them.

Thirdly, If any one ask, wherefore I have taken upon me to meddle with so abstruse a subject? I answer, a reason hath been asked concerning the hope that is in me,

Some

Some persons having declared themselves very fully, and at large in favor of Mr. Elliot's sentiments, and at the same time ridiculing the doctrine of the Trinity, I thought myself called upon to explain; for I considered it a matter of conscience, and have also made it the subject of much prayer, that I might be preserved with a conscience void of offence both towards God and man. If any are yet disposed to find fault, I have only to add, I have sought your good. You and I must shortly appear at the Judgment seat of Jesus Christ.—There all disputes shall be finally settled, and it is my cordial desire, and most fervent prayer, that we may there meet Christ and each other with joy and not with grief: that we may win Christ and be found in him, clothed in his righteousness, united to his person, renewed in his image, filled with his spirit, and solaced with his joys; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, I desire ever to ascribe, as to one supreme, indivisible, eternal, invisible, incomprehensible Jehovah: the only wise, the only true God, all glory and praise, dominion and power, now and for ever. AMEN.

FINIS.

7 DE 65

